

**NORTHEASTERN GREAT BASIN
RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 27, 1999
Elko, Nevada**

Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Members Present and Category Represented:

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Ms. Teresa Conner | (1) Mining |
| Mr. Scott Egbert | (1) Livestock |
| Mr. DeLoyd Satterthwaite | (1) Livestock |
| Mr. Bill Upton | (1) Mining |
| Ms. Kathryn Ataman | (2) Archaeologic & Historic |
| Mr. Merlin McColm | (2) Wildlife |
| Mr. Robert McGinty | (2) Environmental |
| Mr. Jon Muller | (2) Recreation |
| Mr. Larry Barngrover | (3) State Agency |
| Mr. Brent Eldridge, Chairman | (3) Elected Official |
| Mr. Vince Garcia | (3) Native American |
| Ms. Patsy Tomera | (3) Public At Large |

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Representatives Present and Title:

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Ms. Jo Simpson | Chief Communications, NSO |
| Mr. Jeff Weeks | AFM, Battle Mtn. Field Office |
| Mr. Jerry Smith | Field Manager, Battle Mtn. Field Office |
| Ms. Helen Hankins | Field Manager, Elko Field Office |
| Mr. Curtis Tucker | Special Projects Coord., Ely Field Office |
| Mrs. Debi Martin | Contact Representative, Ely Field Office |

Public Attendees:

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Mr. John Falen | Nevada Cattlemen's Association |
| Mr. Derril Fry | |

Note to readers: A copy of each attachment listed in the text of, or at the end of these minutes is on file with the official copy of the minutes in the Ely Field Office of the BLM. Persons desiring to view attachments should contact Mr. Curtis Tucker at (775) 289-1841.

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, Brent Eldridge. Welcome and introduction of RAC Members, BLM Representatives and Public Attendees followed. Corrections were made and minutes were approved from the May 14, 1999 and June 18, 1999 Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council meetings.

At this time Mr. Eldridge and Mr. Garcia made Disclosures of Affiliation concerning

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their association with companies that have grazing permits with the Bureau of Land Management and/or United States Forest Service.

I. STANDARDS & GUIDELINES - WILD HORSE & BURRO

- * Concern regarding lack of attention and urgency being directed at source control in management of horses outside the HMA's (Herd Management Areas).
- * It is unlawful for the BLM to *manage* horses outside HMA's.
- * Theoretically, a Standard regarding management outside HMA's could be an impetus for Congress to allocate additional funds.
- * Ms. Hankins separated HMA discussion into 1) Range conditions, and 2) Law and Policy and suggested the Preamble state that the RACs' recommendation is based on the assumption that the Bureau will make sure there are no horses outside HMA's.
- * All gathers must be approved by the Washington Office and are prioritized as:
 - 1) Court Mandated gathers
 - 2) Established AML gathers
 - 3) Gathers for problematic horses, private landowner requests, public lands outside HMA's.
- * Nevada was declared a National Disaster Area. EFR (Emergency Fire Rehabilitation) monies have been requested and \$100,000 has been received up front.
 - * EFR monies are used to solve problems due to fires while Restoration monies are used to maintain the solution.
 - * EFR monies allotted for gathers are restricted to horses in burn areas only.
 - * Goal is to remove, relocate and adopt horses from the Diamonds burn.
 - * Elko and Battle Mountain Districts have done census work on the fire affected horses in order to accomplish a future proposed gather.
 - * No reported loss of horses due to fires.
- * Removal of 1,900 horses between Elko and Carson City pending for this fall.
- * BLM policy states we can only gather what we can adopt.
- * Assuming monies are received, 1,900 horses are removed and re-seeding is accomplished, the BLM projects that it will still be very far behind in the balance it is trying to achieve.
 - * Burned areas are expected to recover and improve, depending on the number of horses on the resource.
- * Possibility of acquiring allotted gather numbers from other states. Districts in Nevada could pursue internally, RAC could pursue externally via Senators Reid and Bryan.
- * Responses from the Wild Horse Advisory Team regarding the field tour.
 - * Mr. Smith - Very eye opening examples.
 - * Mr. Falen - Disappointed that areas toured were in good condition

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- while severely damaged areas were not seen.
- * Discussion on avenues to place unadoptable horses in private care.
 - * Mr. Smith explained the sanctuary project, Arizona is a future site.
 - * Denver will be issuing contracts to privately house horses.
 - * Private housing interest received from Eureka, White Pine and Elko Counties.
- * Nevada has 50% of the horse population, yet only receives 10% of the funding.
- * Alternative ways of gathering and dispensing of wild horses may require a change in the Wild Horse & Burro Act.
 - * Moving horses to the National Forests.
 - * Leaving the horses on any resource is the most expensive route overall.
 - * No progress has been made regarding the conservation groups' sanctuary funding/birth control.
 - * Possibly turn horses out on fenced public land, such as vacated grazing areas.
 - * The National Strategy lists many options for alternative solutions.
- * Wild horses are allowed to roam in WSA's (Wilderness Study Areas), however, they cannot be introduced into a WSA.
- * The Wild Horse & Burro issue is also a public relations problem.
 - * Negative publicity and lack of knowledge regarding resource impact has affected the positive public support needed.
- * Discussion of Standards & Guidelines possibly conflicting with actions from Congress and the Administration's direction.
- * Concern regarding older horses being returned to HMA's as a result of the Standards & Guidelines not being met.
- * Standard 2, Riparian and Wetland Sites, wording may create a conflict between Washington and the Bureau's management and the application of State Water Quality Standards.
- * Chairman Eldridge asked if we could have the administratively expected boiler plate language in the Standards & Guidelines before we consider their adoption, recalling the controversy of the Livestock Standards & Guidelines amended language.
- * Chairman Eldridge complimented Lynn Huntsinger for her efforts on the Standards & Guidelines.
- * The Members agreed to schedule discussion and approval of these Standards & Guidelines for the next meeting.

II. WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS

- * Discussion of reasons for consideration of increasing Wilderness Areas.
 - * The number of WSA's in Nevada being managed as Wilderness Areas.
 - * There is an existing potential to have some areas released, due to grazing,

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- recreational use and/or highly mineralized areas.
- * No solid plans as of yet to meet with local politicians, citizens and users regarding the determination of proper boundaries. The Governor did promise to look into it.
 - * Gene Kolkman will attempt to speak with Marge Sill again.
 - * The Tri-County group (White Pine, Lincoln and Nye) is attempting to gather a statewide consensus.
 - * The Friends of Nevada Wilderness is conducting an expansion inventory.
- * There are no time limits for studies in a WSA to be performed. Time limits are set on the management plan.
- * A WSA can only be designated as Wilderness Area or released to multiple use by Congressional action.
 - * The Wilderness Act might require action by Congress within 3 years, legally however, there are no consequences if action is not taken during that time.
- * WSA maps are available in Nevada and all RAC members have been sent maps.
- * Discussion regarding allowed uses in the management of WSA's.
 - * Any lawful activity can occur that will not impair the quality of the area to be designated for Wilderness. At the current time, there is controversy about including guzzlers in WSA's.
- * Fire Suppression and Prescribed Burns in WSA's.
 - * Prescribed burns are allowed as long a non-impairing tactics are used.
 - * Use of mechanized equipment, usually only on two-track roads, allowed only when threat to life & property exists.
 - * Fire lines and dozer lines should be built outside the WSA boundary.
 - * Requirements to rehabilitate area making activity substantially unnoticeable.
 - * Any re-seeding in a WSA must be with repeat seed, not introduced species.
 - * Ms. Hankins has the Interim Management Policy for WSA's.
- * Discussion of Cedar Ridge and Red Springs WSA's.
 - * WSA criteria includes 5,000 acres of roadless areas, solitude, naturalness, etc. Water is not a criteria.
 - * The BLM did not recommend these two areas for WSA designation, and has made recommendations to Congress that they be returned to multiple use land.
 - * Elko has recommended 7 of the 10 WSA's in the Elko District to be designated as Wilderness.
 - * It was noted that Senator Bryan informed members of last years Joint RAC meeting that Congress would not pursue this matter until local area groups formed some kind of consensus.

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III. WILD FIRE & EMERGENCY FIRE REHABILITATION UPDATES

Mr. Jerry Smith - Field Manager, Battle Mountain
See Attachment 1.

- * Timeline for fences is essentially over a 3 year period. Obstacles and goals were cited. Discussion on contracts and funding availability pertaining to priorities.
- * Some seed species were substituted due to unavailability.
- * Time period for obtaining a contract is about 90 days. Projects over \$25,000 will be done by the State Office and Denver.
- * Our continuing resolution, including fire rehab, could be delayed by the Appropriation Committees in Congress.
- * Temporary help will be hired.
- * Wood cutting area closures will be in effect in the burn areas for nearly 2 years to allow the rehabilitation process to mature.
- * Livestock closures have been an issue of concern.
- * Fencing between the burned and unburned areas is one primary goal.
- * At the State level, we are looking at hauling/diverting water to these unburned areas.
- * Proposing working with the University Nevada Reno on experimental rehabilitation by setting up a research site to study techniques and opportunities of rehabilitating large pastures.

Ms. Helen Hankins - Field Manager, Elko
See Attachment 2.

- * Elko is also proposing closure of some firewood collecting areas.
- * The weather stations are remote and can somehow can be accessed real time.
- * A hot-line system for public information on the large fires was discussed at length.
 - * It is very difficult to provide up to the minute information, however it is possible to accomplish as long as the public understands that it may only be updated once a day. Our website could also contain this information.
- * Elko and Battle Mountain Districts are discussing with their permittees, the future effect of fencing along fire perimeters on the grazing allotments.
 - * If funding for the fences cannot be obtained through the EFR fund, we can use 8100 (Range Improvement Program) funds, or perhaps Restoration funds.
 - * Our goal is site stabilization.
 - * There would be a long term effect regarding fencing in non-fenced areas, however, each case will be different.

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Chairman Eldridge opened discussion for public comments.

- * Ms. Patsy Tomera would like an update on the UNR Pasture Restoration Project.
- * Mr. Bill Upton suggested a pre-meeting every year during fire season for the purpose of being able, as a public body, to engage in the fire response actions, and be open to public comment.
 - * Mr. Garcia stated that during fire season, public comments were received regarding permittees' access to their grazing allotments in order to collect their livestock.
 - * Chairman Eldridge agreed that information coordination is considerably lacking and would like to see improvements by next fire season.
 - * Ms. Tomera stated that even the media had been under the wrong impression regarding the impact these fires have made upon Nevadans.
- * Ms. Hankins cited that the best example of lack of communication would be Saddler Fire. Ms. Hankins praised efforts by Bill Roach, Nevada Division of Forestry personnel, and at least 4 permittees for informing the public. We must also better inform crews and Incident Commanders of rangeland objectives.
- * Mr. Smith stated that a County liaison to work with the Incident teams is usually the first thing requested at the major fire meetings. Lander County actively participated, however Eureka County refused to participate.
- * Ms. Hankins announced that the Lessons Learned Meeting in October is a BLM Internal Review, at some other time we could have an external meeting.
- * Ms. Tomera and Ms. Hankins discussed the difficulties in obtaining funding.
- * Mr. Smith expressed disappointment with Eureka County's fire input refusals.
- * Mr. Smith stated that each District's normal annual fire rehab plan is not updated annually, and this fire season has placed our plan considerably beyond normal.
- * Ms. Jo Simpson stated that a team met at the Boise National Interagency Fire Center regarding the Great Basin Restoration Initiative. Some members from this team will attend the Statewide RAC meeting to discuss their proposal of bringing back the rangelands. This is a long-term funding package, requesting funding over a 5 year period. Copies will be made available to members as soon as they are reprinted.

III. PINYON & JUNIPER STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

- * Mr. Curtis Tucker announced and described the prescribed burn project in the Duck Creek Basin. The Ely District is coordinating with the Division of Wildlife Resources

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and several other members through a TRT (Technical Review Team) effort.

- * Total acreage for prescribed burn is 3,600.
- * Target is to burn 2,000 of those acres in a mosaic type pattern.
- * 600 acres have currently been burned within prescription.
- * The function of weather conditions will determine future burning this year.
- * The purpose is to alter the vegetation, creating more forage for livestock and wildlife, and to meet resource objectives regarding soil and erosion control.
- * We received some complaints from unaware area hunters.
- * Mr. Tucker noted Lincoln County is dealing with RCI (Resource Concepts Inc.).
- * The East side of the Snake Range in the Ely District has a fire management plan, and one for the rest of the East side of the District into Lincoln County is being drafted.
- * Ms. Hankins and Mr. Smith both stated that this issue is not a concern in their Districts.

IV. FIELD MANAGER REPORTS

Mr. Jerry Smith, Field Manager, Battle Mountain Field Office.
See Attachment 1.

- * Mr. Smith read his report and answered pertaining questions.
- * In response to Mr. Merlin McColm's question, the government pays for the clean up of the abandoned mines. We were allocated approximately \$200,000.
- * It was stated that these mines were active prior to reclamation regulations of 1981.
- * A large clean up project is underway in the Mohave Southern RAC near Tonopah.
- * The Spotted Frog habitat is still in effect, as the habitat exists.

Mr. Curtis Tucker, Special Projects, Ely Field Office
No Attachments.

- * Regarding the CCC (3C) Land Exchange, the major partners should meet to sign the purchase agreement sometime during the week of October 22, 1999.
- * We have received an application from the Ely Shoshone Tribe for withdrawal of approximately 4,000 acres from White Pine County.
 - * The Tribe has indicated a willingness to work with the BLM should any conflicts arise. A meeting is scheduled later in the month, once the CCC Land Exchange is final.
- * We have issued about 18 renewals for 10 year grazing permits. The process is becoming more complicated with the new Bureau procedures.
- * All three Districts have internet sites available. Please check the sites frequently for information of current District events. We would like feedback on the site for the interest

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of public service.

- * Ely is in the process of completing year end budget obligations and is also anticipating a continuing resolution on the new budget soon.

Ms. Helen Hankins, Field Manager, Elko Field Office
See Attachment 2.

- * Ms. Hankins read her report and answered pertaining questions.
- * Ms. Hankins discussed Federal and Private water rights maps, available upon request.
- * Elko Range and Wildlife staff will be tied up with fire rehab for about 50% of the time over the next few months, essentially slowing down other actions.
- * Elko is in the process of developing a work plan for next year, and should have a more detailed breakdown of those goals by the October meeting.
- * Mr. Dave Boyle from Winnemucca was awarded the fencing contract.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Mr. Tucker addressed some Administrative issues.

- * Travel vouchers and questions should be directed to Mrs. Debi Martin at the Ely Office.
- * New members were informed that Mr. Tucker has a wide variety of literature at the BLM for their reference.
- * Our next RAC meeting will be held October 28 and 29, 1999 during the Statewide RAC meetings in Reno, Nevada.

IDENTIFICATION OF ADDITIONAL ISSUES FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

- * Chairman Eldridge: Wild Horse & Burro Guidelines for discussion/resolution.
- * Mr. Upton: Mining report on Toxic Release Inventory.
- * Mr. Garcia: Resource Concepts of Pinyon/Juniper.
- * Election of officers needs to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

- * Mr. Falen discussed National Conservation Areas (NCA's). Proposed NCA Black Rock Desert in Nevada and possibly adding the Steve's Mountains Area, total NCA consisting of roughly 8 million acres. Mr. Falen gave some background information on the downside of this issue.
- * Battle Mountain and Elko Districts currently have no proposed NCA designations.

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- * Chairman Eldridge asked that RAC be made aware of any such proposed NCA's, and also for information on designation of new acronyms that could become an issue.
- * A suggestion to put the NCA issue on the Reno RAC meeting agenda was discussed.
- * Chairman Eldridge asked Ms. Simpson if it was possible to get an agenda item for a report from the State Office on current and proposed NCA's at the Statewide meeting.
- * Mr. Falen suggested that if the Department Of the Interior could give a status report of the NCA's, we should also have a report from industry to explain the downside.
- * Chairman Eldridge suggested that we study several NCA's that have been designated in other areas in order to better understand restrictions and the long-term effects.
- * Ms. Simpson stated that NCA's are open-ended. The NCA's are primarily interested in preservation of area historic trails. Mr. Falen believes there is ability to input verbiage into an NCA.
- * Mr. Falen stated that people are very fearful of the long-term effects of the NCA and additional control by the government.
- * Ms. Hankins stated that there are two levels of effort concerning Black Rock and potentially the Steve's Mountains. Senator Bryan has issued a legislative initiative with Black Rock, there is also an administrative initiative in the Department of the Interior relative to Black Rock, however these may not be the same thing.
- * Ms. Hankins reported information on Land Use Plans in some Districts.
- * Mr. Jeff Weeks informed everyone about the satellite broadcast of Wild Horse Auction. We were able to adopt 87 out of about 140 horses at that time. Prices ranging from \$125 to \$1,000. The overall average price was about \$200. We are planning another auction in the near future.
- * Ms. Simpson commented that this broadcast took the adoption process to a new level. The success of this program could increase the gather levels in the future.
- * Ms. Hankins asked Mr. Weeks about his presentation before the Wild Horse Commission regarding a plan with Mr. Stan Aiazzi. Weeks was unsure about the status of the process, but relayed to the RAC what the basic plan is. The University of Nevada Reno and Great Basin College in Elko, have put together a proposal to use the facilities at HorseShoe Ranch, where some Native Americans would take on horses to train and the Bureau would adopt them out, both parties receiving a fee depending on the level of training.
- * Ms. Hankins commented that the State Directors have stated that the BLM is very supportive and have asked Mr. Aiazzi to work directly with our National Horse Program Office.

At this time, Chairman Eldridge concluded the meeting. All Members, Representatives and Attendees were adjourned.

MINUTES APPROVED:

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Mr. Bill Upton, Chairman

Date

Minutes by:

Mrs. Debi Martin, Contact Representative, Ely
Ms. Alicia Heinbaugh, Office Automation Clerk, Ely

Attachments or Exhibits filed with official copy:

Attachment 1: Battle Mountain Field Manager's Report
Attachment 2: Elko Field Manager's Report